Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures are essential for any organisation. They help ensure the best service user experience, create a safe and accessible environment for activities, and allow your organisation to operate smoothly, consistently, and fairly. Additionally, they are necessary to meet legal, contractual, and funding requirements.

It's the organisations responsibility to ensure that the policies and procedures adopted are both appropriate for their needs and comply with relevant legislation.

What is the difference between a policy and a procedure?

- Policies:

  - Describe what your organisation wishes to happen, for example - we want everyone to have equal access to our services.
  - Define boundaries within which actions are acceptable
  - Clarify roles, relationships and responsibilities
  - Establish values, beliefs and direction
  - Provide a structure for sound management
  - Tell people what to do in specific situations

- Procedures

  - Describe how your organisation plans to make things happen, for example - we will provide our information in different languages
  - Explains to people how to do something

All policies need procedures to make them happen in practice.

Creating policies and procedures

Writing new policy or procedures can feel overwhelming - as long as the relevant information is included and it is understandable for others to follow, it doesn't need to be lengthy.

Your policies should be tailored to your organisation and its stakeholders. What works for one group may not suit another, so it's important to think about what your organisation needs and how it will operate in practice.

It's ideal to create policies and procedures collectively, involving Trustees/Committee Members, and where possible, engaging stakeholders in the development and implementation process.

When creating policies for volunteers, consider what's needed for your organisation.

Examples of policies and procedures could be:
- Health and Safety
- Boundaries/Behaviour
- Safeguarding
- Volunteer policy
- Confidentiality
- GDPR/Data Protection
- Recruiting volunteers
- EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) policy

Key points to remember:
- Let people know about your policies and procedures and how to follow them—this can be done through volunteer induction and training. They're only effective if people know how to use them.
- Regularly review policies and procedures, as needs or laws may change, requiring updates or new policies. Let people know if they are updated and provided any relevant training.

Why have written policies and procedures
- They help the organisation think strategically and act professionally.
- They ensure continuity over time
- They are given greater importance and therefore assure more compliance
- They reduce the chance of misinterpretation

Important – Remember that written materials may not be accessible to everyone. For greater inclusion and accessibility, think about alternative ways to share your policies, such as using larger fonts, making them readable on computers, or incorporating images.

More information:
Whilst policies and procedures should be tailored to your organisation's needs, you can find help guidance and examples to get started:

- The Resource Centre has guidance for smaller community groups. They also have information about equality and diversity policies for small groups
- LGBT Switchboard has guidance for LGBT groups and organisations
- Small Charity Support had an example Equal Opportunities Policy and Procedures

You can also reach out to peers to see they are able to share their policies and procedures.

If you have any questions about procedures and policies for volunteers, would like any advice or guidance and or would like us to sense check your policies and procedures get in touch mel@communityworks.org.uk